

By Charles T J Camden

I was 'rented out' as a Ward Of The State and Hanlon was the name of the first people I was with. I really thought they were my real mum and dad. At the age of about 4 or 5 the authorities decided it was time to take me away from these people and put me with another family.

I also still remember those days when I was being prepared to leave the Hanlon family and continued asking everyone I saw, "Why are they taking me away from my mummy and daddy?" I really thought they were my parents as they were the only family I ever knew at that time.

There is a female psychologist who comes to counsel me [What at my age?] Mrs Christine Brown is her name and she informs me that at that time unmarried mothers had their babies taken away from them at 5 years of age and either adopted out or given to a married member of the family. Hence Lyle Hanlon would have been my aunty, as I learned years ago that my mother had a sister Lyle. I've mentioned it all in a book "Walk In My Shoes From Ashley Boy To Altar Boy," 2 copies of which are at the National Library

*Here's an excerpt from that book*

"I was viewing a video recently on television where in the movie a child was put under a cold shower by her mother who was diagnosed as being mentally retarded. The child was crying. I remember exactly the same treatment when I was about the same age. Horrible memories flooded back which made me shed tears and I was 68 years of age at the time. The pouring out of grief was combinable to what I remembered and what I felt for the little girl who was being abused. I felt so sorry for her. What they use to do to me was put me into an empty bath naked then pour a dipper of cold water over me, then another and another. It used to take my breath. I remember also after one such incident they left me naked in the bath and locked the bathroom door after they left. I remember screaming because I hated being locked up and taking hold of a bottle which contained castor oil and threw it at the window breaking it, then I was able to breath properly."

*And another excerpts*

# "One extremely horrifying incident which happened to me while I was a child of about 8 years of age is being stood to the outside wall in the back yard with a gun pointed at me. Can you imagine standing in front of a firing squad? That's what it was like. I was terrified and thought I was going to die. I pleaded with them not to kill me and still remember what started it all.

Annie was over to play houses and she brought her tea set and I found a bottle which once held Worcestershire sauce. Mixing the remnants with a little water it looked somewhat like tea. I poured it into the tiny cups and we made out to be sipping it. The eldest of the two boys, John, sent Annie home first, then accused me of urinating into the bottle and giving it to the other child to drink. The bully bastard only had to smell the stuff to see what it was. I protested my innocence but to no avail and was stood to the wall with this gun pointed at me to force me to say it was urine. I really thought they were going to shoot me and whether that gun was loaded or not is immaterial, I thought it was.

During this traumatic episode I went into a convulsion fit, as they use to call it, which was noticed by Mrs. Davies from a next door upstairs window. I heard later that she had warned them that if I was not released she would call the police. What the dear soul should have done was call the police there and then with out any warning. She would have really saved me from a long bout of abuse.

They were both bullies but the eldest was the worst and in hindsight would have been about 14 or 15 years old. He was working so he would have been at least 14 years old for it was at 14 children left school back in those days. His brother, Paddy would copy everything his bigger brother, John, done."

# " / Another source of amusement by these two boys was to send me to the corner shop. It's still there, the one on the corner of Brisbane and Campbell Streets. I'd be sent near on dark because I was afraid of the night. I would be told to go out and buy something with the big shinny penny they'd given me and to rush back before it became too dark. This would help me over-come my fear of the dark, I was told. Away with this shinny coin in hand, whistling some tune trying to pretend I wasn't frighten but upon returning home all the lights would be turned out and all doors latched. I would plead with them to let me in but there would be not a sound. I would call out again to let me in. Finally my already weakened courage would turn to fear and I'd pee in my trousers. I would be left outside for what seemed eternity. Some times the fear got so strong I'd scream until I went into another fit of convulsion. Only then would the lights go on, doors open and there they would stand calling me a sissy. These things happened only when I was left with them."

# " . . . Another 'prank' of theirs was to hide in a dark place, after promising me they would not lock me out. Someone would jump out from a darkened door way and frighten crap out of me. I mean it I'd actually make a mess in my trousers.

Another extremely horrific and frightening thing was their habit of placing a hand over a light switch in a dark room. They caught me on this one several times. Perhaps weeks apart, after they had built me up to trust them. I would go to the room, grope around for the light-switch and feel this frightening hand which felt so cold. I'd then realise it was one of them or one of their mates.

I was also terrified of spiders. There would often be a huge 'triantelope' as I'd call it, on my bed. If it wasn't a make belief put there by some one it was a real thing. Today of course I will always pick up a Huntsman spider and put it outside. I now know they're harmless and not poisonous but to a small child their size was enough to frighten crap out of anyone."

# " . . . I had to share a bed with an older boy, for some reason I don't recall. This boy was much bigger than I and many nights I would be raped.

*At the time I didn't know anything about the word rape but I felt uncomfortable with what he done to me.* Some nights I would finish up on the floor after he pushed me out of the bed. I would complain and for my effort would be given the strap for telling tales. So when I got pushed out of bed I'd lay there, cold sometimes but, uncomplaining. After I told the lady that he was doing things with me she took him out of my bed. In the bed opposite was a fellow Denis Mayne who had asthma but it wasn't him.

# " The big trouble was these young blokes had no idea what all their "Jokes" was doing to my mental health. I have thought about things over the years and I don't think their mother had any real idea of the enormity of their actions towards me was. I had told her several times about things. She'd tell me that she would talk to them. She must have said something to them because for a short time I would experience peace. Then they would start again.

I was blamed for the theft of ten shillings and was strapped by Ma Triffett until I admitted taking it. Years later at Ashley I discovered who actually did steal it. I was still at the Matron's cottage, visiting the bigger boys area when I heard one of the boys, whom John often had in his bedroom, bragging about it with his yard

mates. "And silly Charlie got a hiding for it", he remarked with a bloody big grin. I was only a small kid at the time so he gets away with it.

How's this one? A water-pipe ruptures under ground and would you believe it? That's right I was blamed for that also. I was suppose to have driven a stick into the ground so the boys said.

# "Several years after leaving Ashley I read a piece in the Hobart Mercury about Ashley Home and thought about writing a letter to the Editor. I stated that I never had a real home immediately before entering Ashley. "Ashley Home was my home where I was treated with kindness." Old Ma Triffett saw me one day in Park Street and said to me. "I read the piece in the paper you wrote about your old home." I told her it was all true too."

# "In later years I've learned of other people whom while children living with government appointed foster families had been subjected to horrible physical, sexual and emotional abuse. One lady, Janice from Melbourne, told me in a letter that the woman she was placed with, was some time later declared insane and committed to a mental institution. How the heck was she allowed to be in charge of children. Janice told me some of the treatment that happened to her was quite similar to my own. Not physical but mental abuse which is hard to prove because there are no bruises, cuts or broken bones."

"With regard to myself I often think about those days and consider what sort of blokes were those two brothers. They most likely finish up in gaol like myself. The fact remains they were no better than me and if there was a flaw in their nature and were trying to rectify it they went about it the wrong way. If they were trying to change me, which I don't think was needed at that stage of my life, they were going about that the wrong way too. They would have done a better by changing them selves then I would have had someone to admire and look up to. A Role Model! Someone said once, "It is easier to wear a pair of slippers than try to carpet the whole world."

# "Footnote: I learned in the early 1960s that my natural mother had an accident at home where she received burns to her face and after plastic surgery went to the Blue Mountains to rest, where she died. I thought her body may have been brought back to Cygnet for burial but having searched the cemetery, no-one under Leahy was ever found. Or perhaps she married and was buried under another name; Who knows? Or I presume she was buried at the place of her death never giving me a chance to ever see her.

I do believe some of the children from single families will do as I did when they are older. That is they will have nothing to do with their mother. In my case I changed my name because I was given the impression my mother didn't want me and pondered the circumstances of my birth with the consequential unhappy and violent life as a child and of course later as an adult. The hurt and neglect made me feel I didn't need to carry my natural mother's name around with me for the rest of my life.

From January 1966 I began living under my present name. While a child I was told "She didn't want you." When discovering I had a sister I was told, by Mrs. Gallagher, the same thing.

How I discovered I had a sister was like this. I wrote to the Hobart Mercury asking, "Is there anyone who knows the where about of Vera Edith Francis Leahy [pronounced as Lee-he] or perhaps formally,"

I asked would they please be in touch with me at Deloraine.

A Mrs. Gallagher was in touch and in her letter she stated she had special reasons for remembering Vera Leahy and when I was invited into her house she repeated this statement.

"Seeing you look a lot like Vera and you have the same name I will tell you the reason why I have special reasons for remembering her.

"Vera had a daughter and I adopted her."

Can you imagine how I felt? I was over joyful to learn I had a sister. I had close kin. At last I was somebody.

# "I heard Vera also had a boy," the woman continued. "But she didn't want him and gave him away as she did her daughter. I don't know who took him though."

I then told her, "I am that boy."

She looked at me closely and told me that I look a lot like Dawn.

# "I changed the girl's name to Dawn Merlin and changed the date of her birthday to coincide with the date that I adopted her."

I don't think this was fair but that was how things were those days.

I also learned that when Mrs. Gallagher had taken my sister for adoption she was married to a bloke by the name a George Baker and Gallagher is her second married name. So my sister's name was Dawn Merlin Baker after her adoption. Before adoption she had the same name as our mother and was born on the 4th September 1925. I pondered the irony of this because I was too born on the 4th September but in 1928.

By a deed poll dated 7 August 1985, I changed my name officially witnessed by long time friend John Loone MLC The name Joseph being what I chose at my confirmation.

It is a long time between 1966 and 1985, so why the long gap? I made inquiries when I was in Sydney about a deed-poll and was told that I must live, work, pay taxes and vote at elections under any adopted name for at least 5 years. I must have people know me under the adopted name. One of the reasons for this is so as one can not adopt a name for the purposes of avoiding apprehension after the execution of a crime that is what an alias is.

I'm now a little apprehensive about the name change wondering whether I was told an untruth. Seeing all the people who are finding out their unmarried mothers were conned into believing their child had died. The authorities at the time thought they were doing the right thing for the child. Didn't it ever dawn on them that those tiny humans would one day grow into adults and wonder where their roots are? My life, and I can only speak of my own experience, has been a complete mess and failure, no doubt, attributed to not knowing where I came from and the foster people with whom I was placed.

*My uncontrollable behaviour before going to Ashley Boy's Home was the only means of drawing attention to the abuse both sexual and psychological that I was subjected to. Then when I arrived at the Home I was again the recipient of other older boy's sexual desires. Now don't think I'm a hypocrite because of my strong need to write and defend Ashley Home over the years. It is true I was happier at the institution than I was before going there. The sexuality was perpetrated by only a few not the whole institution. The staff were, to most of us, dads and uncles. Most of the other boys were very much like each other who needed some live and true companionship. I hungered for cuddle as did many others. My two books reveal my sentiments about the institution.*

#### EXCERPTS FROM THE SEQUEL

# "The first big boy I remember was Trevor Wickham who would have been anywhere between 13 to 17 *Because he was a Working or as the working boys were classified Yard Boys. One had to leave the matron's cottage, where I was, at 12 years of age.*

He promised me a biscuit one day down at the sports oval under the tall gumtree, if I let him put his penis in my mouth. I was eager for a biscuit and didn't think anything was really that bad but when he wouldn't let me stop and I was sick I knew something bad had happened".

Some of the other boys in the group laughed but someone must have told Mr. Griffin, whom to most of us boys was looked upon as a father figure. He asked me was it true I said; "No Sir!" because of my humiliation and shame. Although I am now that way I have over the years, often thought back and have had some regret that I didn't say, yes Sir. It may have stopped what eventually occurred over the following 7 years.

There was this fat fellow, whose name escapes me, but I think he was a Jago. He would sit on my chest, out in the play yard, and try to force me to give him oral sex. I didn't want to and told him so on several occasions. I didn't like him either. I do remember on one occasion he was successful. One must understand the situation in that place, you couldn't draw attention to something that wasn't allowed. You would be ostracized. The

Cottage Boys were often taken to the other side [the bigger boy' area ] so as to allow the matron and sub matron to have their time off. After all there were only two women to watch over 12 boys up to 12 years of age 24 hours a day. They had to have their days off as did the male staff who were never in-charge at the cottage full time. On their days off was how we come under the influence of the older boys.

Beside the Jago at Ashley there was also a Jago at Aitkin's place at 26 Cross Street, in New Town, where I spent some time. This Jago was John and I don't think he was the same bloke. John was the boy who use to pretend he was saying Mass in Latin at the New Town residence.

I also remember vaguely being raped once at the New Town house. I would have been a bit over 6 old at the time. This particular one confuses me to some extent. I find it hard to separate one of the acts of abuse at Campbell Street and Cross Street. Because of this I approached Doctor Marc Smith at the Deloraine Tower Hill Road clinic if he would hypnotise me in an effort to clear my memory. But unfortunately he told me he does not hypnotise any more and that I should approach another hypnotist. I would if I had the money because this type of medical consultation is not covered by Medicare.

For about the last three years of my internment at Ashley Home I worked in the kitchen where I eventually became head cook also mentioned in the first book. But my time in the kitchen started well before I left school at 14. I would be encouraged to ask the duty staff member whether I could go into the kitchen some weekends to help out. I was always given permission because I was to be groomed for a kitchen hand for it was obvious my interest in cooking showed.

The interest in me by one kitchen boy was not limited to helping out washing up and peeling spuds.. He really loved me and I remember him being called 'Mary Pitt,' who was quite effeminate and would indulge in felacio with me..

I have always tried to find out what has made me the way I am.

As a small child I was a happy and normal little bloke. I remember when I was with the Nuns at St Columbus kindergarten, *[I think the school's name is spelt correct]*. I was caught trying to peep into a girls nickers, while she was writing on the black board, to see what she looked like. I remember it because I received a bloody good spanking for it. But it shows I was quite normal. I use to think and do other silly little things which I know proves I was quite a normal little boy. And all this was while I was with Lyle and Hanlon and her husband, my aunty and uncle.

After writing to different universities here and overseas I learnt that homosexuality is a diverse condition. Which means it's cause is not just one thing. I learned there is a marker in the area known as XQ28 on the X chromosome passed on from the mother. This determines whether you have a predisposition which helps make up the situation. This does not make you gay but creates the temperament towards it. The University of Melbourne's Twin Studies.

*Which is reputed to be the best in the world, even the Yanks refer to it which is a wonder seeing they think they know everything.*

Their research at the Twin Studies, suggests that although the XQ28 region plays a big part, their environment also holds importance, to whether one becomes gay or not. I need not say any more.

#### STILL BEARING THE CROSS [As I Call One Of My Chapters In The Sequel]

Over the years, right to this very day, one must still has to accept other people's pretentious and exaggerated views as to why people are like they are.

Here is a excerpt from **Walk In My Shoes**

# "There is not only one in every six children that are verbally bullied in Australia every year, but also many adults considered different. The victims of bullies experience many low points. For instance, I can speak only for myself, self-esteem is one of the low points. The others are insecurity, anxiety and headaches. I feel quite sad when I'm being put down all the time. One dreads going to the shops or the pub. I remember too well when a person of Aborigine descendant followed me off a Red Lines bus in a threatening manner. Lucky a shop was open into which I moved quickly. I reported that to the police but seeing I only knew his surname I couldn't make an official complaint.

If the victim of verbal abuse is a young person then suicide seems the only way to change things after long bouts of depression. Sustained verbal harassment is a type of bullying and can leave the victim a psychological wreck as it was starting to leave me.

# "I have even attempted suicide myself and was on the verge again at another time but for Catholic priest Joe Medwin. Father Medwin, a kind and compassionate man sat down and talked with me. He gave me strength to fight on. Now I'm indebted to him.

# "I have always considered myself a moderate consumer of alcohol but over the last 20 odd years my consumption has risen due to the fact I need something to help me cope with the abuse.

I was attacked in a hotel by two so called Aborigine two women and their two male companions. Had serious allegations made about me in a hotel on another occasion, which is damned hard to repudiate and after I tried to defend my name, also was again punched to the floor. All of these acts were committed whilst I was

intoxicated. If I was sober I would not have been so brazenly attacked. This is the extent of these people's cowardice. It is no use going to the police as it has been suggested by one senior officer that, "It is all your own fault."

# "Two supposed Aborigine people asked me one day for some money, which I didn't have. If I had have had it I would have given them some. They would walk past my window after their failed bid to get money and call out "poof."

You may wonder why on several occasions people of Aboriginal Inheritance had a go at me. Well I'll tell you. I have over many years written letters to news papers about the 'Stolen Children' and what they had to put up with. I done all I could not to repudiate their claims but to draw attention to the other 'stolen generation.' Perhaps this ignited a spark and knowing I'm Gay this gave them an incentive to 'get me back' because they thought I had no right to the same compensation as they seek

# "On two occasions I've had a car ran at me. The first time, seeing there was no one at the police station I left a note under the door thinking someone would contact me, but no one did. As usual the police will deny that I have ever complained. One day whilst in Huett's Pharmacy and almost in tears as I told the police sergeant that I just can't put up with it much longer.

# "A post office worker, whom I'm sure, has a schizoid personality was another problem. Why I say he has a schizoid personality is because you didn't know whether he was going to call you a filthy name or smile and say good morning, as I passed his place of employment almost daily.

One morning he had a young teenage boy with him when he called to me abusively. I called back telling him he wasn't setting a good example to the boy standing beside him. Apparently he couldn't understand what I meant by that statement because he came over to me like a cocky bantam rooster and laid into me with his tongue saying I was a silly old bastard- - - and a f-- old poofter c---. I being about 20 years his senior struck him a couple of blows to his chin. He didn't or couldn't put up much of a fight.

But one late afternoon while he had this same boy and the boy's mother with him he attacked me and punched hell out of me. Seeing I was extremely intoxicated I couldn't defend myself, so apparently he fights better when he has the upper hand. He left me lying in the middle of the road where Ralph Heffernan found me and took me home disgusted with the man that I should be attacked and left on the road at my age.

# "Being intoxicated was the only way I could cope and after having a few at another hotel, just casually sipping away and minding my own business a big bloke came up harassing me asking out loud. "Are you a poof?" I'd have thumped him if I'd been much, much younger.

Don, an acquaintance, told me the next day he was disgusted and revealed to me the man's name, although he is a friend of his. I rang this man immediately suggesting he apologise for the treatment and humiliation he dished out to me the night previous.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I had too much to drink."

To that statement I said. "Perhaps your problem is much more than alcohol."

Thank you for reading what I have to say. But I must say this people in the future must never have to suffer the indignities of the past. People must learn to understand, that for every action there is a reason. The reason may not be understood by them but then their own behaviour could be mis-interpreted there for misconstrued

In closing allow me to present one more extract from Walk In My Shoes which indicates the type of abuse one has to put up with just because they are gay, and not necessarily through any fault of their own

# "It wasn't long before another detective entered and put a typewritten sheet of paper down for me to sign. As I read this trumped up record of interview I felt sick deep in my stomach. A repeat of Hobart. I was supposed to have been having sexual relations with this young bloke since he entered my flat. I had a single bed in which the two of us had supposed to have been sleeping together. Some police are just pitiful individuals whose life would have been one of crime and imprisonment but for some quaint twist of luck found them in the Police Force.

I told these two I had no intention of putting my signature to any composition of lies, to which one said, "You'll sign it before this night is out you arsehole." I thought it doesn't say much for him if I am an arsehole.

I don't know how long I waited before a large uniformed cop entered. "Whose the bloke who wont sign?" or a question to that effect.

Then my head almost exploded. The rotten cow either kicked me in the head or hit me with some object from behind. He was a big man. He picked me up like a rag doll by my jacket and put me back onto the chair. Then he punched me several times making my nose bleed and my nose was a pretty hard thing to bleed.

I was afraid of having the area surrounding the groin hit as I had a hernia that needed to be operated on. I told this cowardly mongrel about the hernia. "Where?" he asked.

When I told him he tried to kick me there but I kept the area protected with my hands that left my face and the rest of my body open to assault. Eventually the Irish in me had had enough, I stood up and struck out at the cowardly brute.

Then all hell let loose. The other two "law abiding" heroes took to me with what looked like lengths of water hose but I presume were truncheons. I passed out for a short time. When I became conscious enough to know what was happening I was being dragged to a cell.



When all was quiet I heard sobbing coming from the next cell and asked, "Whose that?" A voice answered, "I'm sorry Chas I heard them belting you, I'm sorry."

It was the young fellow. He told me they had threatened to kill him if he didn't say he had been sleeping with me and I had been having sex with him. He had said, "yes," because he was frightened of them.

After all what chip of a bloke wouldn't be afraid of the big brutish b- - -s. I asked him would he come to the Public Solicitors the next day and tell them the truth and what he had heard. His answer was, "Yes."

But unfortunately, these so called pillows of society must have been waiting outside the cells listening to what was being said because it wasn't long before someone came in and took him out. I don't suppose he'll ever read

this. But if he ever does, it would be nice for him to come forward.

The problem then would be it is too far in the past to worry about. Something called the statute of limitations. Statute of Limitation applies only when it involves a private person but not a government instrumentality.

There are some mongrels about and they are not necessarily canines. That coward should have been dealt with. I don't recall seeing any number on his uniform by which I could identify him. It all happened so suddenly and violent.



When I first went to Melbourne I was told to be extremely careful because the police will shoot first and ask questions after. I now know what people were warning me about.

The following morning a police officer came into the cell and told me to wash for court. My face and lips felt sore and swollen. I refused to wash because I wanted the Magistrate to see what these rotten cowardly so called Pillar of Society had done to me the night previous.

The charge of indecency was adjourned sine die. That will indicate how much veracity there was in those allegations. All they wanted to do was get me into the station so as to give me a trouncing. Parkville at that time was and most likely still is, part of the North Melbourne Police area. They wanted to settle the score, because of me writing to the Commissioner regarding some police trying to get into my flat. They would have been police from North Melbourne and most likely the same ones.

I contribute my violent actions a result of the violence which I have had to tolerate. I also contribute my early abuse as to the reason I have not been able to live harmoniously with anyone. I would loved to have married and been a father because I know I would have been the best dad in the world. It's all too late now but I'm mentioning it all in another book. It has been a chain reaction right through life starting with me being taken from my aunt's place to where I first became abused. Then that led to sexual orientation and the consequential discrimination by officers of the law.

I believe both judges and Magistrates should be able to identify fabrications that Police use most of the time and disregard them. But, as a friend said.

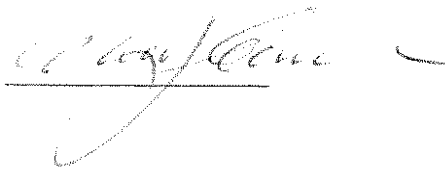
"Judges and Magistrates have to support the police I suppose."

But the most important point is justice and to obtain justice, truth is essential.

Thank you for taking your time to read my story. If only the child welfare had not interfered with my young happy young life in the first place.

Some people may say others have had a harder bringing up and have gone on to achievement in life. The point is this. We are individuals and what one can endure could be the death of another because we are all different..

Yours

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'W. J. ...', written over a horizontal line.